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Ware · The Gambling Element in Life

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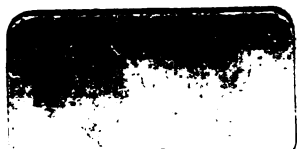


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The Gambling Element in Life:

A

S E R M O N

PREACHED IN THE MUSIC HALL, BOSTON.

SUNDAY, OCT. 29, 1871.

By JOHN F. W. WARE.

Printed by Request.

**BOSTON:
NICHOLS AND HALL.
1871.**

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SERMON.

1 CHRON. xxvi. 18 : "*They cast lots, as well the small as the great.*"

THE facts of history and of experience seem to point to the existence of a gambling element in the structure of our nature. We are all possessed by it, exhibit more and do more toward nourishing the growth of it, than we are aware. Not only in the so-called "hells," or among the "fancy," — by the professional gamester and the recognized methods of his profession, — but among the activities of ordinary life, its honorable intercourse and traffic, this elemental gambling spirit intrudes. Underlying the activities of life, its thoughts and its purposes, is a spirit identical with that which fills us with horror and loathing when it meets us in the garb and the deed of the gambler, by which we are impelled to become partakers, to some extent, in his sin, while we build up the fabric of our enterprise and our character over the mouth of a crater, silent but not extinct, which may at any moment wake to awful life, and overwhelm us, and those we love, in the red heat of its lava, or the slower but no less deadly sepulchre of its ashes.

The existence of this spirit and its operations are visible in, and the monition of what it may grow to comes to us out of, the nursery. You will get hint of it among the earlier

developments of childhood. Watch children narrowly, and you will find that the plays they enter upon with most interest, and hold to with most tenacity, are those into which the chance element enters. The contingencies of the game give you the clew to its fascination. It is not merely sport, frolic, skill, which attract, please, satisfy the child; but watch it closely, and you will see the eagerness of its zest proportioned to the uncertainty of its success. What is sure, what affords no excitement, what has inexorable law, what must be so, scarcely provokes repetition, palls at once, is felt to be dull, and set aside. The clew to the empire that games of marbles have over boys — if I carry a true memory from my boyhood, the most fascinating of games — is not in the nicety of the skill required, so much as in *the large room there is for missing*, the great uncertainty which must attend even the best player. For the time, the whole boy-being is held in thrall, and as the season goes, and the spirit in him waxes hot, you find him goading, with fresh fuel, the glowing fire, in the true gamester's spirit adding the gamester's stake, — a thing that I am amazed that those calling themselves parents a moment allow. So is it with the leading pleasures of boyhood; while early manhood in the bowling-alley, at the billiard table, the horse-race, boat-race, or ball-match, manifests the growth and spread of the same spirit; and you all know that the hazard of the contest alone soon proves an insufficient excitement, the craving spirit demanding the fresh stimulus of a prize, a bet, or the stakes. Nothing grows so fast, or gives such sure token of its growth; nothing is so unhesitating in its demands, so exorbitant, so unrelenting.

The encroachment of this spirit upon the ground of legitimate sport is one of the marked facts of our day, and is worthy consideration among the various significant phenomena which should arrest our attention. It has already

struck telling blows against some of our manliest exercises, bringing into disrepute some of those to which we look not merely for the manly training of young men, but for keeping up the national *physique*. Manly sports, whether of pure skill or of skill mingled with chance, are healthy and well till contaminated by the gambling spirit. What better for health and for morals than honest, manly competition ; and why any thing more than the victory needed ? The Romans were wiser who made their only awards in crowns of leaves, which the national sentiment recognized and the aspirant coveted as the sign of supremacy. We moderns go further and do worse. Not the prize for the victor alone, but every on-looker becomes also an actor ; not merely takes sides, but runs risks, makes his stakes, and is winner or loser. I take issue with those who consider betting as harmless. Betting is a stimulant one side of, and added to, the prime and legitimate one of the contest. It is a fillip to the man when his interest in the mere thing, in the noble result, flags. It has not part in, is no part of, a true rivalry ; it helps no way lawfully the efforts or the result, and it grows in desperation as the excitement of a close contest oversets the balance of judgment, and momentary madness usurps the brain. When the breath comes fast and hard ; when the heart pulses painfully, as the tug for victory comes ; when the eyes strain, the hands are clenched, the teeth set, and the whole body is rigid, and the quick words leap, and odds grow more fearful, and are dared to the brink of ruin, then you see the awful end to which with rapid stride this " harmless thing " hurries. It fastens like a vampire upon those who yield to it. It degrades the game, the race, and the men in it. When one reads a career like that of the young Marquis of Hastings, dying at twenty-six, a worn-out, surfeited *roué*, having won £70,000 in a week, and then squandered two of the finest and oldest hereditary estates, said to yield

him an annual rental of £30,000 ; when one reads about the Derby, and the hold it and other great races have upon the aristocracy of England, and knows how the vices of the aristocracy descend to and contaminate the middle, and these again the lower classes, and sees how honey-combed the morality of a kingdom must be by this popular vice ; when he reads in fiction, and in history stranger than fiction, what Baden-Baden is, and who resort thither and why ; when he knows what the fashionable places of this country are where people go for health, and slay body and soul ; when he sees — as I have in this past week of races in my own city — not merely pools publicly opened day and evening, but the local papers editorially calling attention to them, sowing a knowledge and a thirst broadcast through the city which one detects at his own tea-table ; when the matters of the election or of every day are submitted to the peril if not the arbitrament of the lot, — it is time for some serious thinking, some effort at rousing public opinion, some calling of things by right names. It is a deadened public opinion which countenances, nourishes, keeps alive a habit so fatal : a quickened public opinion alone can destroy it.

The same spirit has got into our educational systems, and its harvest of mischief is plentiful. We have not taught our young the pure love of knowledge, to prize it for itself alone, but in school and college it is the prize, the medal, the rank, the reward, the thing uncertain which stimulates, the thing resorted to to stimulate, and it would seem as if it were largely agreed that the human mind cannot be brought to its required activity except through some such method, — that knowledge has to be coaxed or got into a child, — since on all sides we see contentions, emulations fostered, whose immediate result, at least, is a large crop of jealousies, heart-burnings, envies, discouragements, and defeats, which many assure us are inevitable attendants upon the good

sought. If so, then perish knowledge, and welcome ignorance. We pay too dear for our advantage. The moral must not succumb to the mental. I know that the way to learning is no way of ease and flowers ; but I too much respect the intellect a Divine hand has made and dowered, to believe that, rightly treated, it has any need of such stimulant, while I believe that study is become a tame thing where this spur is wanting. Boys, as men, push for the prize rather than the thing behind the prize. It is not thirst for knowledge that pales the cheek, crooks the back, unnerves the system, sends young girls into consumption, and young men into their graves, so much as thirst for success ; nor that so much as the heavy chances of being distanced. Take away all appeal of this sort from school or college, and you take the charm, the unacknowledged, often unknown, impulse, and the love of learning which now seems to fire so many ardent minds, would suffer collapse. This you see in the fact that so many first scholars, medal scholars, amount to nothing in life where there is no immediate pressure of competition, — the smart children, the promising young men lapsing into a very tame, unprofitable manhood, for which I think our educational systems, ministering to, rather than checking or guiding, a dangerous propensity, are largely answerable. If children cannot be educated without resort to this gambling element in them, let them run wild in the streets, and lapse again into the “ happiness, ignorance, and nudity ” of man’s primeval estate.

Accustomed to the play and influence of this spirit, the young man takes his place in life and sets himself down to his work. He has heard life called a lottery, and has been told of the few prizes scattered among many blanks, and has been wont to act on the doctrine of chances. He enters the list for the prize, nothing daunted, but rather nerved, stimulated by the odds against him. The crowd is where the

most competition and uncertainty are, where the chance is against rather than for; and respectable, remunerative, honest, but plodding and slow, occupations go begging. Not use, adaptation, the love of a thing decides, but the chances it offers to honors or wealth. The farm boy leaves the quiet certainty of livelihood at home, and seeks the city where certainty inheres in nothing. The earth never refuses her increase. Her average always is large. Failure here is overtopped by success there. The early and the later harvest do not alike disappoint. But there is not stir enough: what goes under the name of "enterprise" there is small play to the "chance" element on the farm. He chooses work as hard, as wearing, as dirty, though it be considered more respectable, — for there is work and dirt on wharves and in counting-rooms, — for the chance, small as it is, of a fortune, and goes through hardships, privation, waiting, on his way to it, nothing else would induce him to. The country gives him fifteen or twenty dollars a month, with board and a certainty. He comes to the city, accepts a position every way inferior in real emolument and genuine hopefulness, waits and toils and hopes, with every chance that at the end of a few years he would have been both happier and richer in his despised certainty than in his hard chase after the glittering uncertainty.

To come to business itself, it is not the safe, legitimate, trade which attracts; the sober, steady-paced employment in which tradition says our fathers laid the foundations of their reputation and their wealth, but that which caters to the luck spirit, which holds out brave prizes, — grains of gold in a wilderness of sand. The life of an old-fashioned merchant would have no charm for the young man of to-day. It would be voted slow. He wants something smart. He will read the sales at yesterday's brokers' board, and "go into" that fancy stock in which the man over the way has

just made a fortune ; or he will follow the wild rumor that comes up from California, Australia, Sonora, Lake Superior, or Western Pennsylvania, buy gold or "Erie," or whatever it be that is to-day up, and the more you show him the uncertainties, the more you point out the blanks, the more he presses onward and feels secure in the prize. The disappointed man who dropped, as we say, mysteriously yesterday of an apoplexy ; the great defaulter, more pitied than blamed, whose vast rascality dazzles, while the half his crime is concealed under the name of an "irregularity," and the other half forgotten with the governor's pardon ; the sad and shabby wrecks who hover about the market-place and the exchange, — what are they but victims of the same spirit which has driven another, all corrupt and sin covered, unbidden to his God, — the spirit which moves in us all, and, unless we have a care, will mould us to its degrading image ? The difference is only in name, while the evil which by every day's insidious trifles saps the moral element in society, is very much graver than any the professional gamester can inflict.

Nothing in itself can be more praiseworthy, legitimate, or grand than the deeply-laid and successful schemes of mercantile life, the results of wide observation, nice calculation, accurate knowledge of men and marts, of exchanges and wants ; no skill is greater, no triumph more honorable. The merchants who are not merely the princes of the land, but its moral impulse, its charity, to whose integrity the honor of the nation abroad, as well as its security at home, is largely indebted, are as truly its benefactors and philanthropists as those who are called so. Not the scientific man, the warrior, the ruler, the statesman, the political economist, the philosopher, does more for the general good. The character of commercial communities, the condition of manufacturing centres, the facility and security of inter-

change, the confidence of widows and orphans, are the direct result of his influence ; while all down through every grade of society, whatever he touches as employer or equal, — from the miner who quarries his coal, the girl who tends his loom, the stevedore who loads, the sailor who handles, the factor who receives his ship, — each one feels the man they deal with, and are made mentally and morally as well as materially by him, unseen and unknown save in his transactions. I have seen a city of thousands of inhabitants, of myriad spindles, of an astonishing, ceaseless, bustling industry ; of churches and schools and morals and homes and happiness and honor, — bearing the name of brothers in wealth and worth, in charity and character, who had entered the city of Boston not thirty years before, as I have heard, with all their effects tied up in a handkerchief, — the one to be a Minister, as a peer, at the Court of St. James ; the other minister, without a peer, to the suffering and homeless, soothing his own weary invalidism by perpetual activity in mercies, — such a city, so founded, have I seen grow where I, a school-boy, hunted the purple grape, or took my Saturday bath, the only other sign of life at other seasons the fisherman who dragged his early net for salmon or for shad. Dotted all over New England, familiar in every city and village of the land, seen on your own wharves and in buildings and institutions, known everywhere that the bright sun goes and the nightly stars twinkle, is the beneficent work of the merchant. He is the builder of the new civilization. The old which rested on the sword, on the oppression and unpaid labor of the many, on the gathering of the resource of the earth into the hands of the few, while squalor, ignorance, and barbarism spread with the spread of generations, miserably perished long ago. It could not hold the bond it had forged. God dethroned the warrior, the feudal lord, the despot. The sword rusted and the spear failed. The rude barons

slept, and kings were but shadows of themselves. Following in the bloody wake of the Crusades, arts of peace sprang and the merchant came, the sower of broad seed for a broad harvest. To him is the new era. His venture seeks new lands, opens new ports, creates new demands, calls out slumbering powers, rouses the full energies of man, makes demand on science, skill, literature, faith; and where it opens the way all great, beneficent, civilizing influences follow,—islands, empires, continents are discovered, subdued, replenished, given to man and given back to God.

To-day the mercantile name and honor are in jeopardy. A change has come over them, and the change threatens to settle and remain. In the place of the legitimate work of the legitimate merchant is come the spasmodic, baseless venture of the mere mercantile gambler. The name is taken, the honor usurped, the prestige used by men of plausible schemes and reckless daring, of a certain cunning sharpness in the place of the old, broad, keen, intellectual insight and conviction. The house that is builded, the jewels that sparkle, the style that is affected, the equipage and furniture and exclusiveness that follow a lucky hit in the gold market, the coal mine, the oil well, are just as good as mere dazzle, and more seducing to shallow heads and inexperienced hearts, as if they had come by the more slow and legal way; but shoddy respectability, and petroleum aristocracy, and the financial reputation of the stock gambler, are as worms eating into the old substantial base upon which the grand fabric of merchant character rests. A craft so venerable, with a record so honorable, with opportunity and power so vast, with responsibility so broad and deep, ought jealously to watch against all intruding, and keep its character high and its reputation beyond reproach. As the guilds and trades of old sacredly guarded their honor, should this guild be guarded, and the modern business gambler be denied the

position and name of merchant. Just as jealousy is the legitimacy of the business profession to be guarded as the legitimacy of the medical or legal or clerical profession. As they defend themselves against charlatans, impostors, pretenders, and quacks, should it against swindlers, — no matter who they are, or how they stand, or by what specious names they gloss their shame.

What are the deplorable facts becoming every day more startling, — so startling indeed as to take from us all power of moral indignation, whose most dreadful result is that they so benumb our moral sensitiveness? The community kept convulsed by transactions of so infamous a character that there is no old name for them, and no new one that describes them; transactions that set at defiance precedent, principle, and law; that tamper with all the sanctities, and mingle in one grand *mélange* all the deadly sins, bribery, robbery, extortion, fraud, counterfeiting, falsehood, devouring the little all of widows and orphans, and shutting up property, unsettling markets, depreciating some values for the nominal enhancing of others; in the whole, a grand pandemonium of all that is morally abominable, outrageous, and dangerous. Nor merely these grosser and graver crimes, appearing in “corners” and “rings,” and revenue and custom-house pickings; but the degeneracy of much traffic into a system of transfer and exchange which adds nothing to the wealth and welfare of the country while it seems to, and fosters not merely a pernicious and fatal system, but a taste for what a few years ago would have been branded as illegal, and, more than that, disreputable. What hope can there be of the ultimate probity and purity of that community in which such things become not only wonted, but are not heartily rebuked; come to be applauded, then allowed, then approved, then followed, till they become the habit, the custom, the law? The speculative spirit which runs so wild to-day, and is so

rampant, reckless, and defiant, has nothing in common with the principles of common, honest business ; and its wealth is not the honorable wealth of legitimate transaction. All business interests, all national and international intercourse, are in mortal jeopardy from it, as well as that finer thing, character. There ought to be moral courage enough to put a mark on it that would drive it now, at once, and for ever out of society, and keep us from handing to posterity the entail of our mistake.

Among the laws of the Burmese faith, it is written, that he who cheats by false scales or weights or measures, or who in any way appropriates to himself the goods of others, shall be tormented in one of the greater hells by fire and smoke, which, penetrating through the eyes and mouth and all the other inlets of the body, will burn him alive for the course of eight thousand infernal years. What would the Burmese faith have decreed as the fate of the villains of the nineteenth century ? In that splendid oration of his upon Washington, I remember Mr. Everett to have introduced his visit to Blenheim castle,—the magnificent gift of a nation's gratitude to that Marlborough of whom William said, that he never seemed to see a difficulty, and of whom history almost says that he never seemed to know a virtue. As he entered beneath its splendid portal he seemed to see engraved upon it these words, "*Avarice, Plunder, Infamy.*" So over many a brown-stone front, on many a broad-aisle pew-door, as the legend of many a coat of arms flaunting on coach-panel or on crest, deeply burned in as by the fire of Burmese hells, where man reads and God does not forget it, may you trace the three awful words, "*Avarice, Plunder, Infamy.*"

History, of whose dignity we sometimes talk, is largely the narrative of the development and empire of this gambling element. It underlies the great historical epochs and movements, has settled the fate of hierarchies as dynasties in

times past, and to-day rules in affairs. Not the good of the people, not large ideas, not far-reaching principles, not policies matured, not progress by the slow evolution of law, nor even a self-interest well understood, have influenced those who have become rulers of men, and shaped and controlled destinies; but selfish ambitions, goaded and ministered to by the full sway that position and opportunity afford the most reckless or frivolous play of this most dangerous spirit. Cool, imperturbable, with the desperation of gamblers, monarchs, in the solitude of their own cabinets, or in councils with their courtiers, or about the treaty board with emperors and kings, have thrown their dice, oftentimes loaded, not their crowns only at stake, but the wealth, happiness, liberty, lives of their people, till one wonders that so much of substantial gain has been made in the ages by or against the chance that has defied the great elemental laws of God. Except that God follows behind all disorder with the laws of order, sets up that which is cast down, and makes the wrath of man to praise him, helpless and hopeless had been the condition of the race. Who could have supposed that that great gambler, Alexander, when he stalked with bloody feet across the nations to the confines of the known world, — turned back at last, not so much, as we have been told, by his own tears because there were no more worlds to conquer, as, according to Plutarch, because of his soldiers, frightened by their last great fight with Porus, — was but preparing the way for one who, without armies, by the spirit of gentleness and love was to subdue the nations, whose power should grow and grow long after Alexander's ambitions, as himself, should be forgotten? "Blindly the wicked work the will of God." Monarchs may make the earth their chess-board, and move kings, queens, bishops, and knights to their own wishing, but the game is overlooked and overruled. That most splendid as unscrupulous of

gamesters, the first Napoleon, — whose run of luck struck nations with trembling and monarchs with affright, whose tread seemed as resistless as fate, his ambition as insatiate as death, — coming again from Elba as was foretold by his disbanded soldiery at “the coming of the violet,” checkmated at Waterloo, builded better than he knew; and as his star sank behind St. Helena, a new star rose for man, as the sinking of a second less, but not less scrupulous, Napoleon, precedes and foretells the rising of another and brighter era in the liberties of the race. Nor is the less noticed history that our own to-day writes, unmarked by the presence and control of the same spirit, which we refuse to see and heed and check at our gravest peril. It enters not only into the struggle of parties, but the doings of senates, rules in conventions, has created the lobby, and consigns to the tender mercies of the gambler’s throw all the best interests of a people, imposes monopolies, decides where and how commerce shall go, saddles production with taxes that kill it, puts the good of the many at the mercy of the gold of the few, and, descending from its loftier flights, dribbles itself out in art-union and gift enterprises, free concerts and free lunches, in prize offerings of rival exhibitions, in packages of candy, pop-corn, or tobacco, “in each of which is a prize,” and the whole host of things a low greed from time to time suggests to exasperate and satisfy this cormorant craving of the human heart. De Tocqueville says, that democratic communities have a liking for all undertakings in which chance plays a part; but is not this the deeper truth that there is this impelling something in our very make, to which the history of the universal man bears witness, a tyrant power in savage and civilized, in rude and cultivated, among monarchs as serfs?

To a little scrutiny this spirit will betray itself in our own lives. We are always running risks, settling things by the

cast of the die, rushing in as fools where, were we angels, we should fear to tread. We put ourselves into dangers with which we have no business, volunteer in all sorts of things, and increase the hazards which are, inevitably, sufficiently fearful. It would seem peril enough for a man with every adjunct and caution to walk on a slack rope; but Blondin cannot rest till he crosses Niagara on a wire, at night, blindfold, or with a man on his back, wearing a sack over his limbs, cooking an omelet, now and then standing on his head. The ordinary danger and duty of the soldier would seem enough to satisfy any craving of ambition; but if he have no task of his own he will volunteer for the enterprise of special hazard. There is no difficulty in making up a forlorn hope. It is the luck element in it which makes his vocation so fascinating. In the days of our boasted civilization, that luck element strikes deadly blows at the sanctity of marriage, and degrades it to the traffic of the shambles; and for the bauble of place or of society we not merely risk but sell out our manhood. We throw away the safeguards of a protecting Providence, and are always on hand, ready to be tempted, toying with fate as the moth with the candle-flame. Our very speech betrays the imperiousness of this spirit. Should any question arise, if there be room for doubt, child as man at once cry out; "What will you bet"? Elections, races of men, horses, ships, balloons; steam voyages, arctic discoveries, — as I remember in college days, — the length of sermons, things great, things small, things casual, things sacred, are alike submitted to the same arbitrament. The tamest thing must be whipped up into an excitement, while very grave questions men do not always disdain to settle by the shy of a copper. Women, young and old, catch the contagion. The English lady makes up her betting-book for the Derby as much as her lord, while her American cousin is no whit behind in the energy, though she may be in the

magnitude of her betting gloves, it may be, or candies answering for the one, while gold or Bank of England notes alone will do for the other,—the difference not in the spirit, only the stake. Systematically all things seem to be reduced to the settling of chance. We can't let them take their time and way. We can't wait. We can't be quietly content and decently interested parties, but must have some stake in the thing ourselves, some venture out, some personal interest and risk. And worse yet, under that high pressure of zeal which has invented and made fashionable and almost indispensable those pious frauds miscalled *fairs*, which carry through all sorts of enterprises, we have not self-denial enough to attempt otherwise, we teach our children to be benevolent by the temptations of the grab-bag; we spur our jaded philanthropy by the fascinations of the speciously named raffle; the charity table becomes the anointed faro table, ministered to by the winning way and word of woman, spreading the lure for this very insatiable spirit, which, having fouled all else it has touched, is at last harnessed to the work of the gospel, and if it draw gold where other things have failed, and swell receipts, men do not see that they have meddled with, and thrown the sanctity of a good name over, the most dangerous element in human nature, and fanned the spark, if not fed the flame, which has consumed many a soul,—the element which makes the gambler an outlaw, while it establishes in many a man the gambler's spirit.

I go one step further, and say that the most fatal action of this spirit is found in the way in which we trifle with our own souls. As the man of business ventures into the infected region, staking his life on the chance of escape, so the soul imperils itself amid the moral contagions of life, grasps at what is present which it calls real, and runs the risk of the future which it calls unreal. Life is a gauntlet of

chances run by us at a fearful pace, and at the cost of wounds whose ghastly scars may not all be effaced by the waters of oblivion men suppose to flow fast and cleansing in the far eternity. It need be nothing of this, for never was way so plain as that of our human duty, difficult and perilous, but plain enough, and no just room in it for this sort of hazard. But the gambling spirit we have yielded to in all life pursues us here. With the certainty that we must all die, we are reckoning upon the chances of our individual lives; with the certainty that virtue, purity, truth, are essential to our full joy and recognition in the coming kingdom, we go on hugging our sins, doing pretty much as we please, trusting to a chance which is no chance, that we shall find in our case an indulgent God, ready not only to pity but to excuse and forgive; and so, as the soldier goes buoyant and confident into the fight, knowing that so many in his regiment, his company, his platoon, must die, yet trusting, believing, that he shall escape, we go to our great warfare, calculating that some special edict of the Eternal Judge shall keep us from the common doom. Southey, in his *Curse of Kehama*, describes a bridge over the fiery flood that surrounds Padalon, the Hindoo hell: —

“A single rib of steel,
Keen as the edge of keenest cimeter,
Spanned this wide gulf of fire.”

On this bridge, moved, with lightning speed, a car self-poised, upon a single wheel. Such is this life: just this are we in our passage over it. A little swaying of the balance and we are gone, and yet we gamble with the chance!

But this gambling element in itself is no unmitigated evil. There must be somewhere some fault when an element in a nature given us of God finds only a mischievous outlet.

Nothing of His works wrong except by nonuse or misuse. There must be a virtue in it, a necessity for it. It must be, that in it, rightly regulated, lie the germs of blessing to man. And I think I find therein the secret instinct and impulse which suggest and carry on great enterprises, which give tenacity in presence of difficulties, and prevent defeats from growing into despairs. It is this spirit which spurs us when flagging, and supplies new hope when old hopes fail. It brought Columbus over the seas, against ridicule on land and mutiny on water ; it cheered Washington when all was cheerless ; it has struck the light, more than once, in the darkest periods of our history, which showed and led the way into success. It has made this American nation, subdued the forest primeval, peopled the prairie, builded cities by river and plain, developed the resources of the sea and of the bowels of the earth, settled and civilized California and the western slope, rebuilds Chicago upon its uncooled ashes, stretches itself toward the equator on the one hand, and reaches up to the arctic circle on the other, has girdled the continent with railways, underrun mountains and oceans, harnessed the vapors and the lightnings to its bidding, and made the energy by which this young continent vies successfully with older civilizations, throws itself with irrepressible ardor into the most hopeless positions, achieves victories where only defeat seemed possible, and writes a name not merely glittering but glorious, high up among the names of empires.

Not necessarily bad, but dangerous as all gifts are, possibly the most dangerous, and so the most useful when properly held and balanced. The impulse from which life and progress come, without which stagnation and death, — a grand gift to this grandly gifted nature, — it needs watching, curbing, mingling with, balancing by other things, that

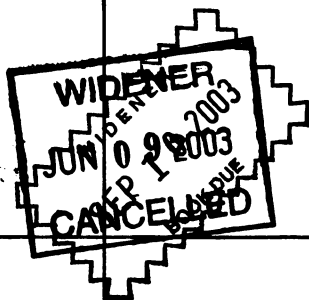
the proper equipoise ensure the working out of the Divine intent. We have already had warnings of what its unchecked license will do. Our national character exhibits the element in its force and in its results, and there is enough in what the unbalanced American man and mind will do, to make us consider. It has many times run us on to the brink of danger ; it unsettles the habits, safeguards, prospects, moralities of myriads to-day ; it is making our young men uneasy and unreliable, discontented with what they have, ready to dash at the chance that shall promise, no matter how rashly. It threatens broad and fatal mischief to this, and through this to coming generations, a legacy to our posterity which will curse them and for which they will curse us. We have had our warnings. We must hold it sharp. We must bring it under curb, — the curb of honor and right. If it become master, soon it will become tyrant ; if it become tyrant, it will do as tyrants always do, lead us away captive, bound in abject, hopeless slavery. As servant it can be of greatest beneficence. Astronomers, discoverers, inventors, philosophers, statesmen, scholars, and poets, the world's great pioneers in thoughts and industries, owe to it that almost divine courage which takes them through darkness and despairs, and brings them into coveted issues ; while it shall achieve for us a future, broad not in material successes alone, not in temporal triumphs, though they take in continents and zones, — for our true future does not lie along the pathway marked by such ambitions, — but a future broad in the achievements of mechanics and commerce, of intellect and art, of morality and philanthropy, of intelligent discipleship to Christ, and reverent allegiance to God, — things in which all national as individual greatness must culminate ; a future rich in the triumph of truth, the emancipation of man, the disenthralment of race, of sex, and of color,

and the establishment of the broad, heaven-descended principles of liberty and love, which every believing soul feels to be the consummation and the crown of the eternal purpose slowly ripening through the ages.

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